

## TWO EPISTLES OF RENNYO, THE EIGHTH PATRIARCH OF THE SHIN SECT

### I

When we consider well and carefully the transient appearances of this human world, we realise that that which is most fleeting is the phantasmagorial duration of human life on this earth. So we have never heard of a man who has enjoyed a life of ten thousand years. Human life passes too soon! Who of our days can live even for a hundred years? Whether I die earlier than you, or you earlier than I, there is no knowing. My life may not extend over today or tomorrow. And yet it does not follow that you survive me because you are younger. The falling of the dew-drops—so many, indeed—from the tree does not necessarily depend where they are lodged, on the leaves or on the stems. Therefore, even if in the morning we have a rosy face, we cannot be sure that we shall not turn into bleached bones in the evening. Such is our karma. As soon as we are touched with the wind of transitoriness, our two eyes will close, our breathing stop for ever, and our rosy face, alas, is changed and gone! All the family come together and weep and wail, but in vain. As this ought not to continue, the body is sent to the waste and burnt on the midnight fire; nothing is left then, but a mass of bleached bones. “Sadness” is indeed too weak an expression to be said of this experience. Human life is thus fleeting, and uncertain. Therefore, let us all realise as early as possible the importance of the future life, and, trustfully relying upon Amitabha Buddha, say our Nembutsu.

With reverence, I remain.

## II

“Those who do not care for their future life are ignorant, even though they may understand eight millions of sutras; but those who [do care for their future life] are wise, even though they may be unlettered women.” [So it was said.] Therefore, in our doctrine, the hard study of many volumes of sutras, and erudition are of no avail if there is no awakening of faith. Therefore, Shinran Shōnin said in one of his letters that no men or women can be saved unless they believe in Amida’s Original Vow. As this is the case, you need not cherish a bit of doubt that those who, abandoning other forms of worship and deeply relying on Amida with a sincere heart, wish to be saved in this life of theirs, are sure, all in all, ten out of ten, a hundred out of a hundred, to be reborn in Amida’s Compensation Land of Purity.

With reverence, I remain.